

# Episode 1x18: "PROPERTY RIGHTS"

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Teaser

#### INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE - DAY

INARA pulls aside a tapestry to reveal a SMALL SAFE. After punching in a code, she opens the door and retrieves a METALLIC GUN BOX. She checks inside it. It holds the LASSITER, resting protected atop the soundproofing foam bedding.

MAL (OS)

Your clients on the way?

She looks up at MAL, who stands at the threshold to her shuttle.

**INARA** 

Yes. Much to my surprise, I did not have to explain why the auction could not be held on the Cortex. While I did not use the term, I believe they understand how black this market is...

(hands Mal the box and rubs her neck) ...and how it's best not to take chances.

MAI

(seeing her discomfort) How're you healin'?

INARA

My neck's... better...

MAL

Let me see.

Mal sets down the box and moves closer.

**INARA** 

What? Has Simon been giving you lessons?

ΜΔΙ

Come on. I got concerns. You're still part of my crew.

Inara does not meet Mal's gaze and turns, lifting up her hair. Mal steps up behind her and looks down at her neck.

INARA

So I'm part of the crew now? For how long?

That's your call, ain't it? Which begs the question, when're you gonna tell the others?

An awkward beat.

MAL (cont'd)

Oh yeah. Looks like it's healin' up just fine.

**INARA** 

It still feels numb sometimes... like pins and... needles... (drops her hair and turns around)

I'm fine.

MAL

Inara... I'm sorry. I let my guard down. Shoulda never-

**INARA** 

It's okay. We're all okay.

(she smiles)

Some not as pretty as before...

MAL

Never say that. You are—

**INARA** 

I was talking about Shepherd Book.

MAL

Book... Right.

INARA

(smiling)

Don't you have some work to do? Your end of things?

Mal backs up and picks up the gun box.

MAL

Can't have a black market auction without a shady, backroom auction house, can we?

(walks out)

Just wouldn't be right.

# INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - DAY

Mal comes down the stairs from the UPPER CATWALK. ZOE and JAYNE are waiting for him, checking their weapons.

**JAYNE** 

We ready to go?

MAL

Told you, you ain't going.

(beat)

Might find yourself another pretty lady wants to get us killed.

#### **EXT. GUONIAN - STREETS - DAY**

Mal and Zoe walk down the dusty street, the storefronts aged and rundown, all but empty of people. They look to be out of breath; sweat shines off their foreheads. Mal holds the gun box by its handle.

**70F** 

This Durham seem on the up-and-up?

MAL

No.

(beat)

But he'll suit our purposes. Nice quiet auction, no Alliance presence. Keep a low profile.

ZOE

That why we ain't taking the shuttle in?

A few HORSES trot past in the opposite direction. Mal waves up at the RIDERS. The road behind them, which they have walked, appears to stretch to the horizon.

MAL

(tired, under his breath)

Top o' the mornin', smart folk with horses...

(to Zoe)

Hope Kaylee's got things fixed up by the time we get back.

70F

Have to say, sir, buyin' used parts at a going out of business sale 'fore we got coin in our hand... Maybe not the best plan ever.

MAL

We got a good deal.

ZOE

Get what you pay for, sir.

Kaylee checked 'em. Said they were fine.

Mal looks up and to the side to see DURHAM BROS. OUTFITTERS. Off to one side, in front of a SALOON, are hitched FOUR HORSES.

MAL (cont'd)
Here we are. What say we lighten our load, Zoe?

#### **EXT. GUONIAN – DURHAM BROTHERS STOREFRONT – DAY**

It is a Wild West-style two-story building with a covered porch and "Durham Brothers" stenciled on the windows. Mal and Zoe approach the door. Zoe, not nearly as winded as Mal, opens the door for him.

#### INT. DURHAM BROTHERS - CONTINUOUS

There is a big front desk, behind which on the wall are displayed liquors and knick-knacks. A CHINESE-INSPIRED CURTAIN hangs across an empty section of wall.

Behind the desk stands RANDY DURHAM, a man in his middle years, grizzled, balding, and unhappy. A cheap bell rings as Mal enters.

**RANDY** 

How can I help you folks?

MAI

I'd like to make a deposit, Mr. Durham. (shows him the gun case)
And I know this ain't no bank.

RANDY

(eyes brightening) Of course! Mr. Reynolds!

Randy pushes aside the curtain to reveal a DOOR. He opens the door, revealing a HALLWAY.

RANDY (cont'd)

Room's all swept and ready. Come step inside and I'll secure the merchandise in the vault. And please do call me Randy.

#### INT. DURHAM BROTHERS - HALLWAY TO BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mal, Zoe and Randy walk down the hallway and into the back room.

Okay, Randy. You mentioned the vault is encased in concrete, 'cause what we got in this little case—

From behind the wall at the end of the hallway, a LONG PISTOL points at Mal's head. He stops.

BARRETT steps out of the shadows, along with PEETE, DOUGLAS, and SAMUELS. Barrett, in his forties with a blond moustache, long black coat and black brimmed hat. It is his gun that is pointed at Mal.

His armed henchmen are more scraggly, but dangerous-looking enough. Samuels has twin bandoliers and two guns.

#### **BARRETT**

I'll take your merchandise, please.

(grabs the gun case)

Think of me as that bank you were just talkin' about. I'm just collecting on a loan to my friend here. With interest, of course.

Mal looks to Zoe, both with arms in the air. Samuels and Douglas disarm them, sizing up the captured weapons, which are much better than their own. Samuels takes Zoe's gun, Douglas takes Mal's.

# **RANDY**

I'm sorry, Mr. Reynolds.

Barrett shoves Randy aside contemptuously then begins to walk down the hallway, along with Douglas and Peete. Samuels keeps his gun trained on Mal and Zoe.

#### BARRETT

(to Mal)

Pathetic little man. Set you folks up to save his own spine. Nothing like his brother...'course, that didn't stop me from layin' him out. They ain't dared put in a new sheriff after that unfortunate... business.

Randy looks down. Barrett and his two followers walk out of sight.

# INT. DURHAM BROTHERS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Samuels cocks Zoe's pistol, presses it against her head.

#### **SAMUELS**

Jeez, Randy. Place sure is clean! Hate to mess it up...

(helpfully)

Careful. That gun's got a powerful kick to it.

SAMUELS

What?

Zoe takes the opportunity to spin around, knock away Samuel's gun with one hand and slam him with the other in the jaw. Samuels drops his gun and Mal kicks him in the stomach, sending him sprawling. Mal finishes by stomping on his head once.

Mal and Zoe look at each other, and quickly bend to collect weapons.

#### **EXT. GUONIAN - STREETS - DAY**

Barrett, Douglas and Peete burst out of Durham Brothers. They run to the HORSES in front of THE SALOON. Douglas and Peete mount up. Barrett, holding the Lassiter's box, is a little slower, struggling with the stirrup.

#### ACROSS THE STREET

A MOTHER (MRS. LUHAN) walks with her seven-year-old CHILD (JONAH), holding hands.

# AT THE DURHAM BROTHERS STOREFRONT

Zoe and Mal burst out of the building. Mal is armed with the two guns taken from Samuels. Zoe fires at Douglas, the force flipping him out of his saddle. His riderless horse and Peete keep going.

MAL takes careful aim with his right to fire on Barrett, but the gun jams.

MAL

(looks at it, shakes it) Gorram piece of *gos se*!

Barrett, now on his horse, fires first at Mal, who dives and rolls out of the way, discarding the jammed gun, bullets puffing in the dust all around him, while unnoticed

# **ACROSS THE STREET**

Zoe sees Mrs. Luhan take cover behind a WAGON CART, protecting her little boy.

Barrett turns and fires at Zoe as she calmly steps behind a POST, wood splinters flying.

Mal returns fire with his remaining gun, hitting Barrett's horse, which rears and falls, spilling him to the ground. Barrett runs across the street, towards the parked wagon cart.

BEHIND THE WAGON CART

Mrs. Luhan's and Barrett's eyes meet. Mrs. Luhan shies back away from him, gathering her son beneath her.

BACK ACROSS THE STREET

Zoe is aiming above the cart, glancing to the side as Mal aims directly at the cart.

ZOE

No. Mal. Don't—

Mal unleashes hell on the cart, firing the remaining rounds in Samuels' pistol.

BEHIND THE WAGON CART

Barrett, when the barrage has finished, uncovers his head and looks up. We do not see what he sees.

He rises and begins firing. Mal ducks behind the injured horse for cover. Barrett makes his way towards a STOREFRONT DOOR.

Zoe shoots, the bullet skipping through Barrett's feet. Barrett stumbles, losing the gun case but not having time to recover as he crashes through the door.

Mal follows him, Zoe close behind, stopping when he sees something else behind the cart in the corner of his eye. He turns and looks

BEHIND THE CART

Mrs. Luhan lies still, shot several times. Jonah kneels by her side.

MAL

Lao tyen buh. <Oh god, no.>

Jonah looks up, tears in his eyes.

**JONAH** 

You killed her.

Act One

#### EXT. FRYE YARD - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The yard is the local SPACESHIP PARKING LOT, cut out of a corner of a cornfield. There isn't much traffic—mainly small ships going between the moon and its planet. SERENITY is the largest ship docked. The parking lot becomes a JUNKYARD with no distinct transition. Ship parts are stacked in piles, invading a beleaguered GARDEN.

#### EXT. FRYE YARD - SERENITY - DAY

**CLOSE ON** 

SHEPHERD BOOK, looking up into the sky. His face is a mess of healing bruises, stitches and swelling.

BOOK

What an ugly mess!

We follow his gaze up high. KAYLEE stands on a ladder which is anchored by Book and WASH. She is inspecting the ship's nose, pulling out bits of flesh and feathers from a cracked buffer panel.

KAYLEE

(smiling down at Book)

Ain't so bad!

Kaylee pauses before getting back to work, looking around.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

It's good to be home.

WASH

Ah, yes, Guonian. Home to the endangered kamikaze, buffer panel-cracking swan.

KAYLEE

Just want to get this all cleaned up 'fore Mom and Dad get back from Aunt Ruth's. Dad would have a fit, he sees the ship this way.

Kaylee pulls out a gobbet of flesh and tosses it aside. Wash dodges it.

WASH

Whoa!

BOOK

You'll make him proud, I'm sure. Is there anything else I can do?

KAYLEE

(shakes her head)

We got in a half-day early, should have more'n enough time enough to clean up and surprise 'em.

Wash's hip starts BEEPING. He pulls out his COMLINK.

WASH

(deep voice)

Lieutenant Washburn here.

(listening)

Hi, honey. Okay... okay... Oh no...

Kaylee and Book look at Wash.

BOOK

Everything alright, son?

WASH

There was trouble in town. A woman got shot.

KAYLEE

Oh, no. Do they need Simon?

WASH

No. They need a preacher.

# INT. SERENITY - SIMON'S ROOM - DAY

RIVER is folding ORIGAMI SWANS on the bed and humming and tune. SIMON is in front of a mirror putting on his best outfit.

RIVER

Putting on your feathers?

SIMON

I'd like to make a good first impression.

She sizes him up, nods approvingly. Simon steps over to where River sits and looks over her shoulder.

SIMON

What are you making?

RIVER

Swans. To replace the one we killed.

SIMON

(picking up one)

They're beautiful.

RIVER

(holding up a malformed one)

This one didn't turn out well at all. The runt of the litter.

Broken and deformed.

(crumples it up)

Shouldn't be here.

Simon takes the crumpled swan and straightens it out.

SIMON

It's beautiful too. Things don't have to be perfect to be beautiful.

River grabs the swan and crumples it again. Simon shakes his head and turns back to glance at his reflection.

**RIVER** 

He's got blood in his heart.

Simon looks at her, wants to ask, but knows better by now.

SIMON

Most people do, River.

RIVER

But it's not beating. It's on his hands. And in his eyes. It'll clot up and kill him – pop! – just like that.

(throws the swans in the air)

He'll explode. Can't keep it in like that, you have to let it flow free, 'cause if it dries up you'll just shrivel away.

#### **EXT. GUONIAN - STREETS - DAY**

A CROWD has gathered around Mal, who crouches by the dead woman with Zoe watching his back. Zoe has her gun in one hand and the Lassiter's gun case in the other. Jonah kneels near his mother, holding her hand.

MAL

I'm sorry, son.

Jonah doesn't answer, but cringes away in fear.

MAL (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I—

MAN IN CROWD

Bein' sorry ain't enough, mister!

Zoe stands firm, gun trained on the crowd, arm protectively around the gun case.

ZOE

Easy now.

**RANDY** 

Was an accident! Y'all saw it! Y'all know what must be done...

Thrusters ROAR as SHUTTLE II lands in the street, kicking up wind and dust. The crowd is momentarily distracted. The door opens and out step Book and Wash.

Book walks through the crowd, who part for him, to Mal. Wash runs to Zoe to see if she's okay.

BOOK

(to Mal) What happened?

MAL

We got in a shootout. Someone stole that gorram broken gun. She got caught in the crossfire. I didn't know.

Book reaches forward and touches Mrs. Luhan's forehead, closes his eyes.

JONAH

Why'd she have to die, preacher?

**BOOK** 

(opens his eyes) I don't know, son.

Jonah begins to cry.

Mal stands, allowing Book to watch after Jonah. He looks to the crowd, which includes several armed folk, looking murderous. He sidles up to Zoe.

MAL

This look like a lynch mob to you?

ZOE

Town ain't got a sheriff, if you remember.

Right.

(turns to crowd)

This was an accident! Just as much the other guy's fault.

(points at Randy)

And this one here too! No need for more killin'!

Randy shrinks a bit.

VOICE #1 FROM CROWD

Well, somethin' needs to be done about it!

VOICE #2 FROM CROWD

Your bullets, your responsibility, s'far's I'm concerned.

VOICE #3 FROM CROWD

That boy ain't got no one else, 'cept his grandma! How're they gonna live?

VOICE #4 FROM CROWD

You're responsible for him now. Him an' his inheritance. Tell him, preacher!

Book raises his head. Looks to the crowd.

VOICE #4 (cont'd)

Joshua Twenty!

Book rises and walks towards Mal.

MAL

What they talkin' about?

BOOK

They must consider this town – maybe even this moon – what's called a city of refuge. You're safe here from retribution, but it sounds like you inherit the responsibilities of the family.

MAL

That all in your book of fairy tales?

BOOK

No. They must read a different translation... Maybe combined a few verses...

Randy steps up to Mal.

Should shoot you, Durham, only it wouldn't be no accident.

RANDY

I'm sorry, Mr. Reynolds. I had no choice.

(Mal looks away, angry)

Barrett runs this town.

MAL

That the man used that poor lady for cover?

**RANDY** 

(helpless rage)

The very one. Ruttin' piece of *gos se*. A rich rancher, been buying up leases and forcing folk off their land since the war.

MAL

(scanning the crowd)

Looks like you can hold your own.

**RANDY** 

These folk? They ain't a danger to anyone 'cept themselves. My brother was a real man. So was Jonah's father.

(motions towards the little boy)

But they're both gone. Barrett saw to that. Shot Mr. Luhan in cold blood a year back. Shot my brother too, when he tried to arrest him.

MAL

Tragic.

(moving on quickly)

So what do I gotta do to keep this crowd from gettin' ugly?

**RANDY** 

See after the orphaned boy and his crippled grandma.

MAL

Well, when you put it that way, how can I refuse?

**RANDY** 

I'll help as much's I can. Like you said, this's my fault s'much as yours. Best we get started. Keep your preacher 'round.

ZOE

Figured he'd help calm things down.

**RANDY** 

He did. But now he's got a job to do.

MAI

Speaking of jobs, I'm sure you'll understand if we hold the auction somewhere a bit more... trustworthy.

Mal turns to Wash.

MAL (cont'd)

I gotta see things through here. This is Kaylee's home, after all. Best we stay on good terms. Take the gun back to Inara, see to it it gets sold. And warn the others.

70F

You sure about this, sir? It was an accident.

MAL

Local custom's strange, but it's the right thing to do. See that boy and his granny on their feet.

(looks right at Zoe)

Too many orphans already in this 'verse, you know that.

Mal turns back toward Book.

MAL (cont'd)

We got a wake to attend to.

# INT. FRYE HOME – LIVING ROOM – DAY

The living room is small, homey, and cluttered. Kaylee and Simon sit at opposite ends of a large, overstuffed, patched couch, looking uncomfortable. She's fiddling with some TOOLS, adjusting a small CLOCK with a cracked casing. He's pretending to read an old MAGAZINE.

River's on the floor in front of the couch, starting at the blank screen of a TELEVISION that happens to be off, although one couldn't tell by how intently she's looking at it.

**RIVER** 

They're here.

FOOTSTEPS AND LAUGHTER sound from outside. Kaylee's eyes brighten and she rises from the couch. Simon stands, smoothing his outfit nervously.

RIVER (cont'd)

(quietly, unnoticed by Simon and Kaylee)

They're always here. Even here.

Jayne holds the door open for MISTER and MRS. FRYE. The Fryes are handsome, solid folk, in their forties, he in a greasy, well-worn mechanic's vest, she in a homemade dress. They have clearly been sharing a laugh with Jayne as they enter.

**KAYLEE** 

Mamma! Poppa!

Kaylee rushes into their arms. River continues to stare at the blank screen, reaching out to touch her reflection in it.

Mrs. Frye releases Kaylee, gives her a kiss.

MISTER FRYE

Lee-lee! What a beautiful ship! And can this be my beautiful little girl?

**KAYLEE** 

Always!

MISTER FRYE

Let me just look at ya...

Mister Frye holds Kaylee's face in his hands. He keeps his smile, but there's some concern to it.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

You look... different.

(Kaylee's smile falters)

You okay?

**KAYLEE** 

I'm always shiny, Poppa!

Mister Frye isn't convinced, but now is not the time.

MRS. FRYE

Kaylee, it's so good to have you home—

MISTER FRYE

I can't wait to get to work on that ship of yours!

MRS. FRYE

—And so nice to meet your friends.

She smiles at Jayne, who shuffles his feet. She turns to Simon.

MRS. FRYE (cont'd)

Who is this well-dressed young man?

SIMON

Simon. I'm a friend of—

KAYLEE

He's the ship's doctor.

MISTER FRYE

Ship's doctor? What's a transport ship need a doctor for?

**JAYNE** 

(under his breath)

Oh, you'd be surprised...

SIMON

(looking at Kaylee)

Oh... well... Infections. Injuries. Illnesses...

(back to Mister Frye)

The occasional gunshot wound.

Jayne rolls his eyes.

SIMON (cont'd)

Sometimes a crate shifts... Falls...

MRS. FRYE

Gunshot wounds?

**JAYNE** 

You know how the 'Verse is, ma'am. Lotsa bad element out there.

MISTER FRYE

(to Jayne)

Well, I'm glad my little girl has someone to protect her.

(to Simon, with somewhat less enthusiasm)

And patch up her scratches and sniffles.

Simon looks down, taking it too seriously.

Awkward beat. River finally pulls herself away from the blank television screen and joins the group.

RIVER

(points to the television)

Got lost in your mirror. Didn't like what I saw.

SIMON

Mister Frye, meet my little sister, River.

MISTER FRYE

And what does she do?

There is a knock at the door. Kaylee goes to answer it. It's Wash, looking like hell.

**KAYI FF** 

Wash, what happened?

**WASH** 

You know a Mrs. Luhan?

Kaylee reacts, motions Wash inside.

#### EXT. LUHAN FARM - ROAD - DAY

Randy Durham drives a HORSE-DRAWN COVERED WAGON. In the back, Mal and Zoe sit on one side of a PINE BOX CASKET, Book and Jonah on the other side. Mal leans forward, listening to Randy, while Book speaks quietly to Jonah, who is staring at the casket.

**RANDY** 

...and his men cut down fences, drive their cattle onto our fields, ruining the crops. And that ain't all he's done. Extorting folk, rustling cattle, setting fires...

Randy takes a breath, waves his hand to indicate the property their driving through.

RANDY (cont'd)

Been after the Luhan land for years. Used to be in his family, you know, back before the war. Claims to have a deed to it, was going to go to the Alliance 'bout it or somesuch...

Mal nods as Randy drones on.

JONAH

She go to Heaven? With my daddy?

**BOOK** 

I expect so, Jonah. She's where there's no pain. Where there's no reason to be scared. Where they smile and laugh all day, because they are with God, and there are no more tears. She and your daddy are there. They see you, and one day, you'll see them again.

JONAH

But I miss them.

**BOOK** 

I know son. And I'm sure they miss you.

#### **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - DAY**

The wagon pulls up to the house and stops. Jonah scrambles out of the back, crying, running around the wagon towards the house.

JONAH

Gramma! Gramma!

Mal, Zoe and Book climb out and walk towards the house. Jonah clambers up the stairs onto the porch, opens the door, and runs inside calling for his grandmother.

MAI

Glad you're here, Shepherd.

Book nods.

MAL (cont'd)

Your words... They're a help to folks.

**BOOK** 

Including you, Captain?

Mal only looks at him as he reaches the stairs.

Jonah backs out of the house, silent.

BOOK (cont'd)

What's wrong, Jonah?

Barrett steps into the doorway from inside the house.

**BARRETT** 

Nothing's wrong, preacher.

Mal and Zoe draw their pistols lightning quick, pointing them at Barrett. Jonah hides behind Book's leg, terrified.

BARRETT (cont'd)

(smiling)

Just accepting my responsibilities, is all.

Mal cocks his weapon.

Townsfolk seem to think I'm responsible. Tell me, say my finger accidentally slips on this trigger, what I get from you?

**BARRETT** 

Please, stranger...

Barrett steps to the side, revealing GRANDMA LUHAN, aging and frail, sitting in a rocking chair with a shotgun pointed at her by Peete. Samuels and a half-dozen more of BARRETT'S BOYS come storming around the sides of the house, guns drawn on Mal, Zoe, and Book.

BARRETT (cont'd)

Don't you think we've spilled enough innocent blood today?

# Act Two

#### **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Mal and Barrett face off, Barrett on the porch, Mal on the ground. Barrett is backed by his half dozen thugs, Mal by Zoe, Book (standing protectively in front of Jonah), and Randy, who has fumbled for a rifle.

**BARRETT** 

I'm just trying to do the right thing. See after my new responsibilities.

MAI

Your responsibilities?

**BARRETT** 

Yes. My fault. My responsibilities. My property, once again.

**GRANDMA LUHAN** 

Ain't your property, boy! Jack bought it at auction fair and square!

Barrett wheels on Grandma Luhan.

Jonah begins to cry and takes a step toward his grandmother, but Book puts a hand on his shoulder.

JONAH

Gramma!

BARRETT

Land was stole from my family during the war!

Book looks at Mal, who is quickly losing patience.

BOOK

War took a lot of thing from lots of folks, Mister Barrett.

MAL

(quietly)

That it did.

**BARRETT** 

Man's got a right to live in his own house. Live where his memories are.

MAI

Seems to me it ain't your house no more.

Barrett, increasingly agitated, paces the front porch.

BARRETT

Gorram Alliance stole the land for a base, never even built it. Then the bank took what's left after, cut it up, sold the pieces to newcomers from the Core... folk like Jack Luhan lookin' to build new lives on top of the ruins of someone else's.

MAL

Ain't sayin' it's fair, but it ain't their fault, neither. Folks got a right to build a life.

BARRETT

Not on my land, they don't.

A beat as Mal and Barrett stare at one another. They've reached an impasse.

BOOK

Mrs. Luhan? Would you like to come down here? With us?

Grandma Luhan doesn't get up.

**GRANDMA LUHAN** 

I'll stay here. No tellin' what these boys will do to my baby's house without me around to keep an eye on things.

Barrett's boys laugh; they like her spunk.

JONAH

Gramma!

MAI

Mrs. Luhan, I—

She looks at him hard, with watery eyes.

**GRANDMA LUHAN** 

You're him, ain't you?

(beat)

They told me what happened to my Carrie. You're the one done it?

Mal looks away, unable to meet her gaze.

GRANDMA LUHAN (cont'd)

(to Mal)

You understand what you have to do, yes? Look after the boy?

(to Jonah)

You go with these folk, Jonah. They're good strong folk. They'll take care of you.

JONAH

No!

Book has to pick the boy up and physically restrain him. Jonah cries into Books shoulder.

**RANDY** 

(to Grandma Luhan)

We'll sort this out, ma'am.

**GRANDMA LUHAN** 

I'll be here waiting.

Mal points his gun at Barrett.

MAL

You hurt her—

**BARRETT** 

(defensively)

I used to be a gentleman, outlaw. She's safer with me than with the likes of you. I'll see after her.

You touch her, we're gonna have a reckoning, you and me.

Mal and his party slowly back away.

#### INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - NIGHT

Kaylee and Mister Frye are on big ladders, welding an UPGRADED WINCH to the ceiling.

MISTER FRYE

(holding a laser level)

Just a little to the left, Lee-lee. Have to get this steady or whatever you're hanging'll come down on the gangways.

**KAYLEE** 

Right on it.

Simon paces near a PILE OF TOOLS at the base of the ladder, looking up and clearly trying—and failing—to be helpful.

River and Wash are on the UPPER CATWALK, both sitting tailor-style, playing WEI CHI. River is winning, moving quickly and paying more attention to her surroundings than the game.

Inara and Jayne set up for the auction, moving BOXES around to serve as tables and covering them with decorations, presumably from Inara's shuttle.

INARA

(yelling up)

Mister Frye, it's very generous of you and your wife to assist us with our auction.

MISTER FRYE

Anything we can do for our daughter's friends, Miss 'Nara. Me and the missus, we—

He shifts his arm, bumps loose one of the tools on his belt, and is unable to grab it in time.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

Boy! Watch it!

**KAYLEE** 

Simon!

Simon dodges out of the way, narrowly avoiding being beaned by the tool. He goes too far, however, and trips over the tool boxes.

Jayne looks up from what he's doing and laughs. Mister Frye joins in.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Poppa!

MISTER FRYE

Lee-lee, truly! Boy shouldn't be hoverin' right 'neath us. He's askin' for trouble. Glad you didn't inherit my slipp'ry hands, girl!

Simon stands up, straightens the tools, trying to regain his composure.

SIMON

Is... There anything I can do to help?

MISTER FRYE

(under his breath)

Stop circlin' underfoot like a lazy kitten for starters...

(to Simon)

Can you run to my workshop? The shed out back behind the house? Fetch me the sonic distributor and an acetylene recharge.

SIMON

(looking lost)

Right...

Simon heads toward the AIRLOCK RAMP.

On the UPPER CATWALK, Wash and River's game continues.

**WASH** 

It's your move.

River glances back at the board. She casually places a stone, capturing a large formation of Wash's stones, and turns her attention to Kaylee and Mister Frye.

Wash stares at the board, confused at how quickly he's started to lose.

ON THE CARGO BAY FLOOR

Jayne continues to move boxes while Inara decorates in his wake.

**JAYNE** 

We finally gonna sell that piece of fei-oo tomorrow?

INARA

That's the plan.

JAYNE

Why'd anyone want it? Ain't no point to a gun that don't work.

RIVER

(from the catwalk)

People like pretty things.

Before Inara or Jayne can respond, Mal strides up the ramp.

MAL

Everything goin' okay?

Inara goes to him, and puts a comforting hand on his arm.

MAL (cont'd)

I didn't know...

Beat as they look at each other. She nods.

Wash, having abandoned the game, is now on the cargo bay floor. In the background, Kaylee and Mister Frye come down their ladders, and Jayne approaches as well. There's a feeling of "We're done for the night."

WASH

You bring my wife back with you, Captain?

MAL

In the house. She and Book're tryin' to get the little guy settled in for the night.

(to Mister Frye)

Your wife tells me she's got a fine meal for us all.

MISTER FRYE

I'm ready to eat. How 'bout y'all?

Wash and Jayne look at each other, slowly walking down the ramp, jockeying for position to be first in line. Mal looks drained by the day's events, but manages a genuine smile; he and Inara follow them in cordial silence.

Mister Frye looks at Kaylee.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

Lee-lee, you sure you're okay? You seem different.

**KAYLEE** 

Been gone a while, Poppa. Being out in the black changes you.

He sees there's something more.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

I... We can...

(beat)

We should go see if Momma needs any help.

Kaylee heads out and her father follows, leaving River alone in the cargo hold.

Gameboard abandoned, she looks into the palm of her hand, at the crumpled "runt of the litter" origami swan.

RIVER

People like pretty things...

#### EXT. FRYE YARD - THE NEXT MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Morning lights the Frye house and its outbuildings, and Serenity and the other vessels.

#### INT. FRYE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sunlight streams in through homespun curtains. The kitchen is small, with River (looking tired), Kaylee, Jayne, and Book sitting around a SMALL TABLE (which is a tight fit for even four) eating a hearty BREAKFAST of toast, eggs, and slabs of some sort of meat. Jonah stands, chair pushed out in the room, animatedly telling a story.

In the background, Mrs. Frye is at the kitchen counter, cooking.

JONAH

And then he tried to get her to sign it over again, but she wouldn't! Not even when we ran out of money to fix the fence.

BOOK

She sounds like a very brave woman, son.

JONAH

Even, one time, he tried to marry her and get it that way, but she said "No way!"

**JAYNE** 

(nods approvingly)

Good for her.

Jayne takes a big forkful of food and crams it in his mouth, chewing lustily.

JAYNE (cont'd)

(mouth full)

Mrs. Frye, this's the best eggs I've et since... Since I seen my own momma!

Mrs. Frye laughs and keeps working.

Jayne realizes Johan's staring at him and stops chewing.

JANYE (cont'd)

What?

JONAH

Sir?

Kaylee smiles at Jonah like he's the cutest thing ever in the history of the 'Verse.

JONAH (cont'd)

(halting)

Do you think you could... Well, could you... Could you fight Mister Reynolds and Mister Barrett to get our house back?

**JAYNE** 

Cap'n ain't gonna take yer house, boy. Not his way, not like the other fella. But if he did...

(blustery, playing it up)

I'd do it. Fight 'em both. Getcher Gramma back, too!

Jonah laughs in delight. Mister Frye comes in, muttering under his breath, he nods a greeting to everyone, then goes to the counter to get some food. The room is crowded and tight.

BOOK

Jonah... Why don't you sit down, son, have something more to eat?

Jonah listens to Book, although he's fidgety.

BOOK (cont'd)

(quietly, to Jayne)

Jayne, are you developing a taste for playing the hero?

**JAYNE** 

(less blustering)

I got a old momma, too. I get kilt, no one better turn her out.

Mister Frye pulls up an empty chair and squeezes in.

MISTER FRYE

Mornin', folks.

(to Kaylee)

Workshop's a mess...

River looks down at her plate.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

(muttering)

Fancy boy don't know an acetylene recharger from his elbow...

**KAYLEE** 

Poppa!

Frye and Jayne share a smile. Mrs. Frye shakes her head as she continues her work.

SIMON (OS)

Good morning.

Everyone exchanges looks as Simon joins them at the table, crowding in between River and Kaylee. Mister Frye, at least, has the good grace to look vaguely embarrassed.

MISTER FRYE

Mornin', Doctor.

Simon nods to Mister Frye. The sound of forks on plates is uncomfortably loud in the wake of Simon's appearance. Jonah looks around.

Simon opens his mouth to make conversation, but hesitates, not sure who to start with. He looks at his sister.

SIMON

Are you alright, River? You look tired.

RIVER

Taking longer than I thought to make it pretty. Pretty swans fly straight.

While some might be used to River's antics, the Fryes are not among them. Awkward beat.

MRS. FRYF

(to Jayne)

So how exactly was it that you came to join the crew, Jayne?

**JAYNE** 

Well, ma'am, I saw little Kaylee's pretty face and I just couldn't help myself...

Kaylee punches him in the arm and giggles. Simon's fork freezes midway to his mouth.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Nah. Truth, I set out to rob the Cap'n, he hired me instead.

(beat)

I'm a bad man.

JAYNE grins mock-evilly, causing first Jonah, then the Fryes and River, to laugh.

#### EXT. FRYE HOUSE - PORCH - SAME TIME

Wash and Zoe sit on a comfortable, if aging TWO-SEATER SWING, looking across the field at Serenity.

**WASH** 

Man could get used to this.

ZOE

Suppose so.

WASH

This is a nice place. Good neighborhood.

70F

If you like murderous, land-grabbing ranchers as your neighbors.

**WASH** 

And those hospitable, friendly Fryes.

(sarcastically)

Likes of them make me sick.

He raises a mock-serious eyebrow as she laughs. She nestles closer.

ZOE

Have to admit, sky was beautiful last night, all those stars. Almost like bein' out among 'em.

**WASH** 

That's right. Stars. That's my top criterion for a home. Well, that and chickens. Got to have chickens...

ZOE

Got stars aplenty right on Serenity, honey.

WASH

True enough, but it's no place to raise a...

(beat)

You know, someday, maybe a son—

As if on cue, the FRONT DOOR slams open and Jonah bursts out, running and laughing.

Before the door closes, River shoots out, also laughing.

Door starts to swing, then out rushes Book, trying to keep up.

**BOOK** 

Jonah! River!

Wash looks at Zoe and shrugs.

WASH

Okay, maybe not that one.

They settle back into the swing.

WASH (cont'd)

Still...

(beat)

Chickens...

# **EXT. SERENITY - LATER**

It's afternoon, and Kaylee and Mister Frye are up on the starboard ENGINE POD, working on it.

MISTER FRYE

Wouldn't say this in front o' your momma, Lee-lee...

KAYLEE

(looking up) What is it, Poppa?

MISTER FRYE

Serenity... She ain't just a transport, is she?

Kaylee looks down at her work.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

Your captain... Jayne... Hades, even that doctor seem to got more spine than most folk I ever met...

Kalyee smiles.

KAYLEE

Poppa, it's... Ain't like I was tryin' to lie, or anything, but... (beat)

Can we talk later? Just... I just want to get this pod upgraded, 'kay?

Mister Frye nods... For now.

MISTER FRYE

Ship's gonna run smoother'n any I ever seen, we get done with 'er.

KAYLEE

She is a beauty, ain't she? (pats the pod) That's my girl.

He looks at her, presumably thinking the very same thing. He smiles, reaches over, and pats her hand.

#### INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - SAME TIME

The cargo hold has been decorated as best it can to look like the inside of Inara's shuttle. A huge spread of food, enough for two dozen people, rests on the boxesturned-tables.

Inara stands serenely in the center of things, Mal pacing around her. Wash and Jayne linger near the food, snacking when they think no one's looking. Zoe sits on the stairs leading to the upper catwalk.

MAI

Everything ready? What about the whores durves?

INARA

It's "hors d'oeuvres," Captain. Relax.

MAI

I just want to get this sold so I can end this business with Barrett.

A beat, and then a group of a half-dozen MEN come up the RAMP. ALEXI BELOV and JEAN LECOINTE, powerful and prosperous looking, are served by two BODYGUARDS each.

Lecointe and Belov talk as they enter, while the bodyguards get the lay of the place. Belov, in particular, seems a little put off by the location and happy to see Inara.

**BELOV** 

Helicopters. From the Greek. Early precursors to the modern skiffs. Truly.

LECOINTE

I'll believe it when I see it.

Inara steps forward and curtsies to the two men.

INARA

Welcome, Alexei, Jean. I see you have already become acquainted.

**BELOV** 

Ahh, Inara. You are as lovely as ever.

LECOINTE

Lovelier. <A cherry-blossom in bloom>. You are not busy after the auction, I trust?

**BELOV** 

You are planning to lose, I see.

**LECOINTE** 

The Lassiter wins for rarity, but our Inara must take the prize for value.

INARA

For shame, Jean. I blush. We're waiting for one more bidder, but in the meantime, come, have some who—hors d'oeuvres.

#### **EXT. FRYE HOUSE – REAR – DAY**

There are a few buildings behind the Frye house, but no one is there to see a half dozen RIDERS approach. It's Barrett and some of his boys, including Samuels.

**BARRETT** 

(to Samuels)

Now, remember, this crew, they got a lot of guns, don't need the trouble. Just take the boy.

Barrett and his thugs spread out. Samuels hears something, the faint sound of a DRILL, perhaps.

**SAMUELS** 

(pointing)

Sir?

The building is a large shed covered with flaking paint and surrounded by jars of chemicals. The ground leading up to it is muddy, with several large sets of booted footprints and the tracks of a wheeled vehicle clearly visible. The door hangs off its hinges, the deadbolt on the interior held by a single screw.

#### INT. MISTER FRYE'S WORKSHOP - SAME TIME

The workshop is a chaotic jumble of TOOLS, GADGETS, and GIZMOS. River is in the middle of it all, wearing gloves and goggles, concentrating on some project we can't see.

**RIVER** 

(to herself)

Fly straight, my pretty little swan. Won't be a runt anymore.

Sparks from what she's working on light up her face. She works for a moment, then suddenly stops. Still holding her MYSTERIOUS PROJECT, she turns.

BARRETT (OS)

Forget about the boy...

Barrett and his men are in the doorway, guns drawn.

BARRETT (cont'd)

(smiling)

This is worth way more.

A flurry of action as River tries to rush past them—

## INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - LATER

Mal, Inara and Wash are on the upper catwalk. Belov and Lecointe are on the floor below, talking and eating but seem to be getting bored. Jayne and one of the bodyguards are talking (and eating), while Zoe and the other three bodyguards seem to actually take their job seriously.

MAL

(to Inara)

Three bidders? That's all you come up with?!?

Mal doesn't look happy.

INARA

Trust me, Captain, Alexi and Jean can afford a fair price, and, while I don't know the third bidder myself, Hu Wan-Ji vouches for him.

Mal nods, annoyed.

MAL

Who knows more about sellin' high-priced goods than a—

Inara looks at him, daggers in her eyes, not having to say a word to stop him.

**WASH** 

Uh, guys?

They stop in mid-fight and look at him.

WASH (cont'd)

Third bidder's here.

DOWN ON THE FLOOR

Things have gotten crowded. The THIRD BIDDER has brought EIGHT BODYGUARDS, all armed, all dressed in expensive black suits. The Third Bidder steps through the crowd, looking up, his face masked by the hat he's wearing.

THIRD BIDDER

Ah, Captain.

MAL

<Monkey-flung feces!>

WASH

You know this guy?

#### THIRD BIDDER

I believe you have something that rightly belongs to me (takes off his hat)
I'd like my artifact back.

The man on the floor is DURRAN HAYMER, previous owner of the LASSITER.



#### INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - CONTINUOUS

Haymer addresses the other bidders while Mal rushes down the stairs, followed by Inara and Wash.

MAL

You're welcome to bid, same as anyone else.

**HAYMER** 

Why should I bid on something that was stolen from me?

BELOV

Stolen property, this is? You did not say that, Inara.

Mal and Haymer now stand face-to-face, and it seems fairly likely that no good will come of it. Inara tries to intervene.

**INARA** 

Mr. Haymer, I'm sure we can sort this out—

Incoherent conversation erupts as everyone begins speaking at once, mostly yelling. Jayne and Zoe inch closer to the captain.

**BELOV** 

Perhaps we could see the artifact, now.

**LECOINTE** 

(sarcastic)

Yes, let us see the Lassiter. Perhaps it has Mister Haymer's name on it, no?

#### **EXT. SERENITY - SAME TIME**

Kaylee and her father are now working on the port ENGINE POD. As Simon approaches with a tray of sandwiches, they seem to hit a snag.

#### MISTER FRYE

Gorram—

(noticing Simon)
Doc, would you mind runnin' to my workshop? This coupler done snapped!

He holds the COUPLER up, so Simon should have no problem finding an item that looks the same.

#### MONTAGE OF QUICK INTERCUT SCENES

- —Inara in her shuttle, opens the safe. Inside is the Lassiter box.
- —Simon rushes across the field toward the house and the workshed behind it.
- —Inara returns to the crowd in the cargo hold carrying the Lassiter box.
- —Simon approaches the workshed.
- —Inara places the box on one of the tables. The bidders gather close.
- —Simon reaches the open door of the workshed.
- —Inara opens the box...

#### INT. MISTER FRYE'S WORKSHOP - SAME TIME

Simon spots River, beaten and unconscious, balled up in the fetal position.

# INT. SERENITY - CARGO HOLD - SAME TIME

The box is empty. Everyone peers at it.

MAL

Huh.

A beat, then a flurry of activity as Haymer's bodyguards draw their weapons and point them at Mal and the crew. Zoe and Jayne draw their own in response, while Wash puts his hands up.

With all the other weapons out, the remaining bodyguards draw their own weapons, distracting some of Haymer's bodyguards from the crew.

In the middle of this, Mal, Inara, Haymer, Belov and Lecointe continue as if guns haven't been drawn.

MAL (cont'd)

(to Haymer)

How did you—

LECOINTE

You are mocking us.

**BELOV** 

(to Inara)

This is not amusing. I postponed my daughter's wedding for this.

**HAYMER** 

I've had enough of this.

Although Haymer doesn't have a gun, two of his men have weapons trained on Mal. They, in turn, are the targets of Jayne and Zoe.

Mal looks at Inara for some sort of answer.

INARA

Mal, I don't know! It's been in my safe since you brought it back.

LECOINTE

(to Inara)

I am disappointed. I can't believe I've come all this way for such as farce.

(to Mal)

You are incompetent, sir.

**HAYMER** 

(to Mal)

If I didn't know better, I'd think he was telling the truth. Where are you hiding my gun?

**BELOV** 

I had expected better from a Companion. Come.

He motions to his bodyguards and the three of them head toward the ramp.

INARA

Wait!

She goes to speak to Belov while Mal continues to face off against Haymer.

MAL

I ain't hiding the gun. Who do you think I am, Saffron? (beat, as Haymer stares uncomprehending) ....Yolanda.

**HAYMER** 

(calm)

Do you want to provoke me into a murderous rage, Mr. Reynolds?

In the background, Belov shakes his head angrily at Inara and stalks out.

**LECOINTE** 

(furious, to Mal)

This is my cue to bow out as well. It is clear that you have deceived us, Mister Reynolds.

INARA

Jean, wait!

Lecointe brushes Inara off as he and his men leave the ship.

MAI

That what this is about, Haymer? Runnin' off the competition to put an end to my auction?

**HAYMER** 

This auction is indeed over. Now show me where you've hidden my gun.

(beat)

I'm not playing, Mister Reynolds. I will tear this ship into ten thousand pieces if that will restore me my property.

Before Mal can respond, Kaylee rushes in.

**KAYLEE** 

Captain—!

She takes in the scene and cuts herself off. Mal gives her a "Go on" look.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

River's hurt, Captain. Says it was Barrett—

MAL

Barrett, that < leprous panda-kisser>! Jonah okay?

**KAYLEE** 

Still with Book. But, Cap'n, River says she had the Lassiter, and they took—

Haymer looks around, clearly amazed by the lot of them.

HAYMER

<Buddha protect me from liars and fools>, this story doesn't even make sense, Captain!

Mal ignores him and goes to Kaylee. He motions for Zoe and Jayne to follow as well.

HAYMER (cont'd)

Captain! Where do you think you're going? I want my gun back.

MAL

(walking out)

So do I.

# INT. FRYE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

River is lying on the couch, but otherwise, it's standing room only, with an odd sense of crowded community. Mal and Simon stand over River, Book a half-step away with a protective hand on Jonah's shoulder.

Haymer's inside with four of his bodyguards, and Inara is at his side, hand on his arm, whispering to him, calming him. Zoe has her eye on the bodyguards.

The Fryes and Kaylee look on with concern from the edge of the room, while Jayne, Wash, and the remaining bodyguards are on the porch looking in through the windows.

MAL

Your sister okay?

SIMON

Does she look okay to you, captain?

MAL

(sighs)

How'd she end up with the gun?

SIMON

Captain, I don't know—

MAL

"Captain, I don't know." That's a yarn I'm tired of hearin' from you. Best you learn a new one to spin!

RIVER

Was fixing it. Make the broken little swan fly straight.

MAL

(finding a target for his frustrations)

FIX IT?!?

(exasperated)

It's an antique. You don't fix antiques! It ruins them!

River lays back in the couch, pondering that.

JAYNE (OS)

Mal...

Jayne's holding the door open for Randy Durham.

**RANDY** 

Captain Reynolds...

**HAYMER** 

Oh, and now what local actor is this in our ludicrous play?

Mal goes to Randy by the door. Haymer also follows.

RANDY

Barrett asked me to deliver a message.

MAL

He did now, did he?

**RANDY** 

He wants to offer a deal—

MAL

Only deal he'll get from me's six feet o' dirt!

RANDY

Says he'll trade the gun for the property.

(looks down)

Says he'll throw the boy's grandmother into the bargain. Doesn't want any Luhans, um, sullying, I think was the word, he used, his lands.

MAL

(to HAYMER)

See? I ain't got it.

**HAYMER** 

Barring the possibility that this is simply another trick of yours, why should I not then deal with this Barrett?

Mal ignores him, looks back at Randy to see if there's more. Randy looks uncomfortable, glances at Jonah across the room.

RANDY (cont'd)

(quietly)

His boys tell me he's even having Jack Luhan's body dug up on account o' he ain't a Barrett and shouldn't be in the family plot.

**JAYNE** 

(spits)

That ain't right.

**HAYMER** 

Very well, Captain. I will prolong this farce one step further.

**RANDY** 

Is there anything I can do?

Mal nods.

# EXT. LUHAN FARM - WOODS - NIGHT

Zoe stalks through the woods, followed by Jayne, who stumbles over a root but rights himself quietly. We see that they are near the Luhan house, on the opposite side of the road.

Zoe halts, raising a hand for Jayne to stop.

# **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT**

Barrett, Samuels, and two of the other BOYS sit on the porch, peering into the night. To their left is the road, then the ranch lands, ahead and to their right the garden and then woods. Mal emerges from the woods straight ahead.

**BARRETT** 

Here he comes.

**SAMUELS** 

Think he'll deal?

**BARRETT** 

Course not.

They ready their weapons.

Mal, alone, approaches to within yelling distance, holding his hands up.

MAL

Now, as you can see, I come to trade—

BARRETT

Got a better idea.

(quietly, so only his men can hear)

Now.

A SNIPER in a tree behind Mal fires on Mal, who dives for the cover of a LOW WALL as bullets fly by him. Barrett and his boys take cover on the porch and fire as well, trying to catch him in a crossfire.

## EXT. LUHAN FARM - WOODS - SAME TIME

Zoe and Jayne hear the GUNFIRE and scan the trees, looking for the apparent sniper.

**JAYNE** 

Gorrammit, where is he?

Zoe points.

## **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - SAME TIME**

Mal fires back at the porch, inching up to get a better angle at the porch, and is nearly killed by the sniper. He looks in the direction of the woods

MAL

(muttering)

Any time would be good...

Then, the CRACK of a rifle.

## EXT. LUHAN FARM – WOODS – SAME TIME

Jayne lowers his rifle as the sniper crashes down.

### **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

Zoe and Jayne have joined Mal. Things aren't much better—the gunfight's still a draw, both sides firing from cover. Then the gunfire from the porch slackens.

# EXT. LUHAN FARM - ROAD - SAME TIME

Coming out of the darkness are Wash and Mister Frye, as well as Haymer and three of his bodyguards, all armed.

And behind them, Randy leads a CROWD of more than two dozen locals, including boys and old men. They look a bit nervous and are armed with a variety of weapons, from fowling rifles to pistols, torches to pitchforks, but there are enough of them to be a threat.

#### EXT. LUHAN FARM – PORCH – SAME TIME

Barrett's boys are starting to get a little edgy, and stop firing, unsure of whether to try and gun down the townsfolk.

**SAMUELS** 

Steady, fellas.

**BARRETT** 

Stand true, boys, this don't change nothin'.

The men look at each other. They're not so sure.

# **EXT. LUHAN FARM – SAME TIME**

Mal gets up and approaches to within thirty feet of the porch, as the posse spreads out behind him, surrounding the front of the house.

All told, Barrett has as little more than a dozen BOYS. Some of Barrett's boys open windows and point rifles out, while others join him on the porch, including Peete, who pushes Grandma Luhan, a rifle to her back. Barrett stands partially behind her, using her as a human shield.

Jayne scowls at that.

Mal and Barrett eyeball each other as their groups adjust, aiming, pointing weapons, and posturing.

MAL

I want what's mine.

**BARRETT** 

So do L

Behind Mal, the posse is getting fidgety. Could be they don't particularly like seeing Grandma Luhan threatened.

MAL

You walk away now, Barrett, maybe we'll let you go in peace.

BARRETT

Brave talk, for a man shot a innocent woman dead just yesterday. Plannin' to send her some company?

Mal keeps his fury in check. Barely.

MAL

Was an accident, plain and true. (beat. Mal looks down) Wish to God it hadn't happened.

Beat. Complete silence. Then rumbles from the posse.

**RANDY** 

He ain't the one tryin' to steal someone's home!

JAYNE

Or threatenin' no poor ol' lady!

POSSE MEMBER

And he ain't tore up our crops, neither!

POSSE MEMBER 2

Or extorted nothing!

Things are turning against Barrett. He can sense that some of his boys are starting to lose their nerve. He stands casually, as if nothing is going wrong.

**BARRETT** 

Well, I don't mean to stay out here all night. Got some fixin' to do to my house. So why don't you all get a move on!

He makes a shooing motion with his hand.

BARRETT (cont'd)

Go on back to your homes, 'fore someone gets hurt!

RANDY

No, Barrett. You'll answer for what you done!

BARRETT

Here's the only answer you'll get!

Barrett reaches inside his coat and pulls out a WEAPON.

Barrett points it at Randy and FIRES.

Randy falls back dead, flesh charring, shirt afire. It's no bullet that killed him.

Haymer's eyes go wide as he recognizes THE LASSITER.



# **EXT. LUHAN FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

Chaos erupts as Barrett walks down the stairs, firing the Lassiter. His men rally and offer support fire, shooting into the crowd.

Mal, Jayne and Zoe seek cover at different locations, and in the background, Wash tackles Mister Frye to push him into the safety of the treeline.

Folks in the posse run in every direction. The posse scatters, a few trying to support Mal and his crew, but most just trying to escape.

Most of Barrett's shots miss, hitting the grass and setting it ablaze.

In the middle of the chaos, Haymer stands, staring at the Lassiter, his bodyguards in phalanx around him, an island of calm in the chaos.

Mal, crouched in SHRUBS, sees Peete start to drag Grandma Luhan into the house.

MAL (pointing)

Jayne!

Jayne, hiding behind a BARREL, nods and rushes around the side of the porch, disappearing from sight.

Zoe, from her vantage point behind the LOW WALL that previously sheltered Mal, gives him cover fire.

Samuels looks over the side, sees Jayne coming—

Then Zoe shoots him. Samuels topples over the rail, landing not far from where Barrett stands, still firing into the chaos, clearly drunk with power.

#### BARRETT

Run, you <mouse droppings>, run!

Barrett looks at Samuels's body and fires at Zoe. The laser beam burns a groove in the top of the LOW WALL. As Barrett fires again, Mal slams into him, spoiling the shot. The bolt goes wide, setting a tree afire.

Barrett and Mal fall to the ground in a tumble of fists and anger, the Lassiter sailing a few yards away. Mal manages to keep hold of his own gun and pistol whips Barrett, gaining the upper hand.

With the Lassiter silenced, Barrett's boys lose their fight and some of the posse start to come back. On the porch, Jayne stands protectively in front of Grandma Luhan.

Zoe walks forward to try to help Mal, but can't fire at Barrett because the two men are going at it so ferociously, still rolling in the dirt.

When they roll close enough to Samuels' body, Barrett grabs his gun, but Mal snatches it from him.

MAL

No!

Mal rolls back and stands, out of breath. Barrett also stands, hands up. The posse comes closer to watch, while Zoe and Jayne cover the men on the porch.

Mal and Barrett stare at each other, out of breath, faces lit by the fire of the blazing grass.

### **BARRETT**

You think you've done something here? (shakes his head)

This changes nothing. This isn't your home. It's my home, my world. Soon as you're gone, you'll be forgotten and I'll be on top again.

The posse edges closer.

POSSE MEMBER

Finish it!

POSSE MEMBER 2

Kill him!

**BARRETT** 

(malicious grin)

You'd shoot another unarmed person? Just like that?

MAL

I'm tired of hearing that.

Mal throws Barrett Samuels' gun. As Barrett catches the gun, Mal blows him away.

MAL (cont'd)

(quietly)

Not your home, either.

Mal relaxes, thinking it's over. Then he looks up at Zoe and sees her covering him.

MAL (cont'd)

<All the shiny stars in the heavens>, what now?

It's Haymer and his two bodyguards.

Mal's hand tightens on his pistol.

**HAYMER** 

Five thousand.

MAL

What?

**HAYMER** 

I'll give you five thousand for the Lassiter.

**JAYNE** 

That ain't a third of what—

**HAYMER** 

It's a fair offer for something that's not yours to sell in the first place.

MAL

Ten.

Haymer looks at the weapon, shining in the dirt.

**HAYMER** 

Done.

# **EXT. FRYE YARD - DAY**

Mal and Haymer stand facing one another, as Haymer's bodyguards stand near a sleek black HOVERLIMO. Mal has the Lassiter box under his arm, and a heavy-looking canvas bag in the other.

In the background, Mrs. Frye is at Serenity's ramps with a huge platter of sandwiches, which she offers to Zoe and Wash. Kaylee, Inara, and Simon are there, too. Simon shakes hands with Mrs. Frye, then heads inside.

Further off, Mister Frye, Jayne, Book, Jonah, and Grandma Luhan (who is in a rocking chair) are in a cluster, talking.

MAL

(hefts the bag)

Bank had the ten thousand. Good as your word.

**HAYMER** 

Did you think I would cheat you?

MAI

I'm a bit surprised, is all.

He hands Haymer the Lassiter box.

**HAYMER** 

Why is that?

Haymer is a little distracted, opening the box to check on the Lassiter.

MAL

Well, after what Saf—Yolanda told me about you—

**HAYMER** 

(looking up)

What did she say?

MAI

Said you were a stone killer, made bio-weapons in the war.

**HAYMER** 

Biological weapons? Heavens no. Of course, you won't like me any better for what I did do.

Haymer closes the case.

MAL

That was?

**HAYMER** 

Computer systems. Specifically, a new fire control system for skiffs. Reduced reloading times by half and improved accuracy while moving.

MAL

(admiringly)

You gorram hwoon dan.

Haymer hands the case to one of his bodyguards and offers his full attention to Mal again.

**HAYMER** 

Yolanda is... a remarkable woman. Did she give you her wedding catechism?

MAL

"On the night of their betrothal, the wife shall open to the man, as the furrow to the plough." And he shall work in her until she knocks him out with poison and steals his ship.

**HAYMER** 

She stole your ship?

MAL

Twice, in fact. Did you find her... articulate?

Haymer leans forward, smiling, and they're just two guys.

**HAYMER** 

The things she could do with her tongue would shock a Companion.

MAL

(regretfully)

I suppose I'm glad I never found out.

# INT. SERENITY - SIMON'S ROOM - SAME TIME

River sits on the bed, carefully unfolding swans and pressing the paper as flat as possible. Simons opens the door and steps in.

**SIMON** 

(stepping over to her) What are you doing?

RIVER

Unfixing them. Not supposed to fix things. Ruins them.

SIMON

The Captain was talking about—

**RIVER** 

(looking up at him)

If you fix me, will that ruin me, too?

SIMON

(sitting and hugging her)

No, *mei-mei*, no.

## **EXT. FRYE YARD - SAME TIME**

As Haymer's hoverlimo pulls away, Mal heads toward Mister Frye, who draws away from Book and the Luhans to meet him.

Mal passes Jayne, who is heading for Serenity, and claps him on the shoulder.

MAL

Straight shootin' last night. Thanks.

**JAYNE** 

(mimicking Mal's "you're on my crew" voice) Well, you're my Captain.

Jayne grins and heads on his way.

Mal reaches into the bag and pulls out a smaller SACK OF COINS, which he hands to Mister Frye.

MAL

For the work you done. And a little extra. For your hospitality and troubles.

MISTER FRYE

Captain, you don't have to—

MAL

(won't hear it)

Not a fraction of what I really owe you...

Waves vaguely in the direction of Kaylee, who's hugs her mother and starts to head over. Mal reaches into the bag and takes out another pouch.

MAL (cont'd)

This one's for the Luhans. For after I'm gone. Not near enough to pay for what I took, but...

MISTER FRYE

Of course.

Mister Frye takes the bag, and, a little to Mal's surprise, hugs him.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

You look after my Lee-lee and I'll look after them for you. That a fair trade?

Mal nods and the two men part, both smiling, as Kaylee joins them.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

Sure you won't stay for the funeral? Think the folks might like to hear that preacher of yours say a few words.

MAL

Got a passenger needs to see New Melbourne any day. (looking at the Luhans) Probably better this way.

Mal offers Mister Frye a farewell nod, then walks away, toward Book, who has just finished saying goodbye to the Luhans.

Kaylee and her father look at one another.

KAYLEE

So... You prob'ly figured out she ain't just a transport ship...

MISTER FRYE

No, she ain't...

They hug, and, for that moment, Kaylee is a little girl, clinging to her daddy. Her eyes glisten and she closes them, digging her face into his shoulder.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

She's your home... Ain't she?

Kaylee ends the embrace and takes a step back, drying her eyes. Even as the tears disappear, she's smiling.

KAYLEE

That she is.

MISTER FRYE

You're sure you're all right, Lee-lee?

She takes a deep breath, considers carefully before answering.

**KAYLEE** 

Shinier'n I been. Must be the home cooking. Mom learns what we eat most times, she'd never let me go back.

The two turn to look at Serenity.

MISTER FRYE

I remember my own protein-eating days.

(beat)

And I suppose I shouldn't worry too much 'bout the gunshot wounds, considering how exciting the past two days have been.

(in a conspiratorial fatherly tone) 'Sides, you've got that nice young man to look after you.

Kaylee laughs, bright and cheerful.

MISTER FRYE (cont'd)

And bring him back to visit, too. I know the missus would love to cook for him again. I don't think anyone's ever complimented her cooking like that.

(beat)

He's a bit rough around the edges, sure, but he'll clean up nice.

Beat.

KAYLEE

Jayne?!?

MISTER FRYE

Well, isn't...

Beat.

KAYLEE

Poppa, if it's anyone, it's Simon.

Mister Frye looks vaguely embarrassed, but recovers quickly.

MISTER FRYE

Well... He's not bad either. Doctor, huh? Neighbors'll be impressed, we ever get a doctor in the family.

KAYLEE

Poppa!

Their laughter follows Mal, who has joined Book. The two walk slowly toward Serenity, but Mal glances back at the Luhans. Jonah and his grandmother look a little lost.

Mal looks at Book for approval. Book nods and heads for Serenity.

As Mal approaches the Luhans, Grandma Luhan offers a cordial nod, but nothing more.

MAL

Y'all can go back to your home now. Barrett's gone.

GRANDMA LUHAN

Thank you for seeing to that, sir.

JONAH

You killed him?

Mal squats down by the boy so they're eye to eye, nods solemnly.

JONAH (cont'd)

(tentative smile)

I wish I killed him.

MAL

No, you don't, son.

Mal stands, pats the boy on the shoulder, and slowly walks toward Serenity.

MAL (cont'd)

No, you don't.

# **EXT. FRYE YARD – MOMENTS LATER**

Mister Frye has one arm around Mrs. Frye's waist and the other hand on Jonah's shoulder. Grandma Luhan sits in her rocking chair next to her grandson.

The four of them watch as Serenity takes off.